

Dear SOMHELP members,

As a follow-up to last week's e-mail, this week's topic is healthy workplace meetings for your brain (mental health). There is a huge amount of information out there on this topic, so I'm going to just touch on a few topics, and give some references if you'd like to do a more in-depth study on your own.

Starting on a light note...

"They're the most inefficient; most dreaded ...," Roanoke workplace expert and consultant Gloria Elliott said of office meetings. "You've got the complainer. The butt-kisser is getting his nose browned. Everybody else is doodling."

"The brain can only absorb what the butt can endure." - Unknown

Tips for Effective Meetings that Promote Mental Health

A good meeting is a short meeting. This implies that time wasting should be avoided and the meeting should remain focused on the task at hand. Make sure meetings are as short as possible while still achieving the meeting goals.

- Require an agenda: Get a pre-agenda out at least a day ahead and identify the purpose for the meeting and what is to be accomplished. Let everyone know the time in and out; outline decisions, action to be taken, time frame and people involved.
- Stay on Time!
- Provide scheduled breaks.
- Finish early.
- Appoint a timekeeper to limit discussion on each topic.
- Ban the use of cell phones and personal digital assistants such as BlackBerrys.
- Try standing-only meetings.
- Let people come and go from the meeting; do not hold people captive.
- "Make it fun." This is whatever your group wants it to be, but make sure laughter is included, as it builds camaraderie.
- Incorporate physical activity and nature. People think better while they're moving and in the fresh air. Have walking meetings, and don't be afraid to move the meeting outside if the day is fine.
- For more on running effective meetings, you might start here:
<http://www.mindtools.com/CommSkll/RunningMeetings.htm>.

A Positive Thought - I can make a difference in meetings by presenting insightful ideas.

Finally, there will be no productive, healthy meetings if there is conflict that exists between meeting attendees. If at all possible, incorporate conflict management techniques to promote a healthy meeting, and a healthy workplace.

Conflict Resolution Basics

Do not avoid the conflict, hoping it will go away. Trust me. It won't. Even if the conflict appears to have been superficially put to rest, it will rear its ugly head whenever

stress increases or a new disagreement occurs. An unresolved conflict or interpersonal disagreement festers just under the surface in your work environment. It bubbles to the surface whenever enabled, and always at the worst possible moment. “This, too, shall pass,” is not an option – ever.

Do not meet separately with people in conflict. If you allow each individual to tell their story to you, you risk polarizing their positions. The person in conflict has a vested interest in making himself or herself “right” if you place yourself in the position of judge and jury. The sole goal of the employee, in this situation, is to convince you of the merits of their case.

Do not believe, for even a moment, the only people who are affected by the conflict are the participants. Everyone in your office and every employee with whom the conflicting employees interact, is affected by the stress. People feel as if they are walking on egg shells in the presence of the antagonists. This contributes to the creation of a hostile work environment for other employees. In worst case scenarios, your organization members take sides and your organization is divided.

For more good tips for conflict management in the workplace:

http://humanresources.about.com/od/managementtips/a/conflict_solve.htm.

Information contained in the SOMHELP e-mails is general in nature, and not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. As always, you should consult with your healthcare provider before making any changes.

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